United Nations

Daily Highlights

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MONDAY HIGHLIGHTS

+ Secretary-General, in London, holds talks with Egyptian President; receives message from Arab League on sanctions against Libya; scheduled to arrive in Phnom Penh on 7 April.

+ Security Council calls "unacceptable" decision of Bosnian Serb party not to permit further humanitarian aid delivery to Srebrenica.

+ Population of Srebrenica must be protected by enhanced United Nations presence and increased humanitarian aid, or else be evacuated, UNHCR says in letter to Secretary-General; meanwhile, airlift to Sarajevo resumes.

+ Security Council condemns all attacks on UNTAC, particularly recent attacks resulting in death of two Bangladeshi peace-keepers and "cowardly assassination" of three Bulgarians on 2 April; asks Secretary-General to report back urgently on responsibility for "these murderous acts"; Secretary-General's Special Representative for Cambodia calls killing of the three Bulgarian UNTAC soldiers "treacherous and cowardly"; slaying will not go unpunished, says UNTAC spokesman.

+ Azerbaijan says Armenian armed forces have attacked districts of Kelbadjar and Lachin, threatening lives of 60,000 people; Armenia asserts that its forces did not take part in any of those actions.

+ Special Rapporteur on Human Rights situation in former Yugoslavia sends team to eastern Bosnia and Herzegovina to obtain first-hand information on present situation there.

+ Secretary-General emphasizes contribution by youth in building new approaches to international cooperation, in message to twelfth World Assembly of Youth, meeting in Kuala Lumpur.

+ Permanent Observer of Palestine to United Nations again calls on Security Council to protect Palestinians in occupied territory, including Jerusalem, in accordance with Council resolution 681 (1990).

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For information media—not an official record

+ Barbados asks for inclusion of new General Assembly agenda item for this session entitled "Emergency assistance to Cuba".

+ Importance of foreign direct investment to international growth and development stressed at annual meeting of Commission on Transnational Corporations today at Headquarters.

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Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali met this morning in London with President Hosni Mubarak of Egypt and later with the Secretary-General of the League of Arab States, Esmat Abdel Meguid.

In a statement to the press following his meeting with President Mubarak, the Secretary-General said he had discussed with the Egyptian President the problems of the Middle East, including the question of the Palestinian deportees. They had also talked about "the most pressing problems" of the African continent. President Mubarak will fill the Presidency of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) as of month of June.

During his meeting with the Secretary-General of the League of Arab States, Mr. Boutros-Ghali received a message from seven Arab and African Ministers of Foreign Affairs regarding the Libyan question. Mr. Boutros-Ghali will convey the message to the President of the Security Council, which is due to review the sanctions against Libya on 10 April.

The Secretary-General left London today for Phnom Penh via Bangkok. He will arrive in the Cambodian capital on Wednesday, 7 April.

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The Security Council has expressed shock and extreme alarm at the dire and worsening humanitarian situation in the enclaved Bosnian city of Srebrenica. In a statement issued over the weekend, the Council called "unacceptable" the decision by the Serb party not to permit any further humanitarian aid to be delivered to that town, and to allow only evacuation of its civilian population.

Under the statement, read out by Council President Jamsheed K.A. Marker (Pakistan), the Council demanded that the Bosnian Serb party honour its most recent commitment to guarantee the free movement of humanitarian convoys and the protection of endangered civilians. It condemned the Bosnian Serb party's pursuit of its unlawful, unacceptable and abhorrent policy of "ethnic cleansing", aimed at territorial aggrandizement, which had blocked the United Nations humanitarian relief efforts.

Recognizing the imperative need to urgently alleviate the sufferings of the population in and around Srebrenica, the Council demanded that the Bosnian Serb party cease and desist from all violations of international humanitarian law, particularly the deliberate interference with humanitarian convoys.

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The Council also condemned the continuing disregard and wilful flouting of its resolutions and statements by the Bosnian Serb party, and urged the Secretary-General and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) to use all the resources at their disposal to reinforce the existing humanitarian operations in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

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If the people trapped in the eastern Bosnian town of Srebrenica are to be saved, the United Nations must either enhance the international presence there -- including the United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR) -- and provide humanitarian relief to the protected area, or carry out a large-scale evacuation, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees Sadako Ogata has told Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali. She noted that the first option would require the strongest political pressure from the international community on the Serbian side.

In a letter to the Secretary-General, dated 2 April, Mrs. Ogata said that 20-30,000 persons were trapped in Srebrenica, with another 30,000 in the surrounding area. They were desperately in need of food, medicine, clothing and shelter. Many refugees feared that the Bosnian Serbs would pursue their military objective to gain control of the town, and that the cease-fire would not hold. "They are desperate to escape...because they see no other prospect than death if they remain where they are," she said.

Only three UNHCR convoys had reached Srebrenica in the past two weeks, the letter noted. Departing trucks were forced to evacuate over 5,560 women, children and elderly, and several hundred wounded persons. Several people were crushed to death in a stampede to escape the town. The Bosnian Serb military had since said that it would not permit any more aid to be brought into Srebrenica, but would allow UNHCR to continue the evacuation only.

Mrs. Ogata's letter was transmitted by the Secretary-General to the President of the Security Council.

In a separate development, the UNHCR yesterday resumed its humanitarian airlift to the besieged city of Sarajevo, following a security assessment and new assurances of safe and unhindered access to all sides. Seventeen flights were scheduled to land yesterday at Sarajevo airport.

The airlift was interrupted on 19 March, after a British plane was shot at by anti-craft artillery while on its final approach to landing. The resumption of the flights will bring assistance to more than 350,000 people, at a time when food stocks in the city have become dangerously low.
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The Security Council this afternoon strongly condemned all attacks on the United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia (UNTAC), particularly the recent attacks which have resulted in the death of two Bangladeshi members of

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UNTAC and "the cowardly assassination" of three members of the Bulgarian contingent of UNTAC on 2 April.

In a Presidential statement read out by Council President Jamsheed K.A. Marker (Pakistan) on behalf of its members, the Council asked the Secretary-General to report back urgently on the circumstances of "these murderous acts" and the responsibility for them.

The Council expressed its strong support for UNTAC in carrying out its mandate within the framework of the Paris Agreements of 1991 and demanded that all hostile acts against UNTAC cease immediately and that all parties take measures to safeguard the security of UNTAC personnel.

The Council restated its determination that the democratic elections in Cambodia be held from 23 to 27 May and stressed the importance of creating a neutral political environment in that country, including an end to acts of violence and of all threats and intimidation committed on political or ethnic grounds.

Meanwhile, Secretary-General's Special Representative for Cambodia, Yasushi Akashi, has also condemned what he called "the treacherous and cowardly attack" Friday night of the three Bulgarian soldiers with UNTAC by a group of the National Army of Democratic Kampuchea (NADK).

According to UNTAC spokesman Eric Falt in Phnom Penh yesterday, Mr. Akashi had told a meeting of the Cambodian Supreme National Council that the violent attacks in the past two weeks against UNTAC personnel had reached "unacceptably high levels". He deplored the ineffectiveness of the local authorities to take "the necessary steps" to offer protection to the population and to control their troops.

The slaying of the three Bulgarian soldiers would not go unpunished and the matter would be "vigorously" protested and brought up with the Party of Democratic Kampuchea, the spokesman said. UNTAC was also considering the prosecution of those responsible for the attack, who were well known to the Authority.

Turning to the recent migration of ethnic Vietnamese from the Tonle Sap area, Mr. Falt confirmed that Mr. Akashi would meet later today with the Special Envoy of Vietnam, Deputy Foreign Minister Vu Khoan, to discuss that issue.

Meanwhile, the Government of Vietnam has maintained that UNTAC and the administrative structures in Cambodia have "not only the moral, but also legal obligations to protect the ethnic Vietnamese" living there.

According to a statement issued by the spokeswoman for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam, the Paris Agreements of 1991 stipulate that "UNTAC shall be responsible during the transitional period for fostering an environment in which respect for human rights shall be ensured". More specifically, she said, the Agreement stipulates that in the

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event of serious violations of human rights in Cambodia, the competent organs of the United Nations will be called upon to take appropriate steps for the prevention and suppression of such violations.

The note comes in response to recent statements by UNTAC that it cannot protect the hundreds of families of ethnic Vietnamese residents who are fleeing from the acts of ethnic violence against them in the nord-west Cambodia. UNTAC has said that the responsibility for protecting the Vietnamese residents in Cambodia rests with the Government in Phnom Penh.

The Vietnamese statement was transmitted to the Secretary-General in a letter, dated 30 March, signed by the Permanent Representative of Vietnam to the United Nations, Trinh Xuan Lang.
S/25497

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Azerbaijan has informed the United Nations that 12 villages in the district of Kelbadjar have now been occupied by the armed forces of Armenia, threatening the lives of 60,000 people in the area.

In a letter to the President of the Security Council, dated 31 March, the Permanent Representative to the United Nations of Azerbaijan, Hassan Hassanov, further said that some 30 villages and the whole nothern part of the Lachin district were at present cut off by Armenian forces. Mr. Hassanov called upon "the whole world community" to influence the aggressor and avert the deaths of tens of thousands of peaceful people in the Kelbadjar and Lachin districts of Azerbaijan.

Meanwhile, Armenia has contended that Azerbaijan, on 23 March, began a "massive military offensive" aimed at the region of Mardakert in Nagorno-Karabakh and the humanitarian corridor in Lachin, on the southern border of Nagorno-Karabakh.

According to a letter to the Council President, dated 1 April, from the Armenian Permanent Representative to the United Nations, Alexander Arzoumanian, "Karabakh Self-Defence Forces were compelled to take decisive countermeasures in response to this offensive". He asserted that "no military forces from the Republic of Armenia took part in any of these actions", but that Armenian forces remained on full alert on their positions along the Armenian_Azerbaijan border.
Documents S/25509, S/25510

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The Special Rapporteur on the Human Rights situation in the former Yugoslavia, Tadeusz Mazowiecki, has sent a team to eastern Bosnia and Herzegovina to obtain first-hand information on the present situation in that area. Mr. Mazowiecki was appointed last August by the Commission on Human Rights to investigate human rights violations in the former Yugoslavia and to make recommendations to prevent their future occurrence.

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According to a press release issued at Headquarters, the objective of the fact-finding mission is to attempt to gather reliable testimonies from those directly affected by the recent hostilities in eastern Bosnia and Herzegovina, in particular refugees and displaced persons. The mission will first visit Tuzla and then travel to all places where victims of violations from that area have sought refuge.

When the mission returns to Geneva, the Special Rapporteur will report on the team's findings to the Human Rights Commission and, through the Secretary-General, to the Security Council.

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Young people can make an important contribution in building new approaches to international cooperation, Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali said in a message to the twelfth World Assembly of Youth, meeting in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, from 3 to 7 April.

New ideas and concepts were needed to promote international peace and security, economic and social development, democracy and human rights, he said. Young people possessed the required qualities of imagination, creativity and generosity in abundance.

The Secretary-General went on to say that preparations were under way for the International Youth Year in 1995, and the Commission for Social Development had recently considered a draft youth programme of action towards the year 2000 and beyond, which would go before the General Assembly in 1995.

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The Permanent Observer of Palestine to the United Nations, Nasser Al-Kidwa, has called on the international community and the Security Council to protect the Palestinian people, in accordance with Council resolution 681 (1990). In doing so, he referred to the request made by the Arab Group on 22 March for the Council to meet to consider the serious situation in the occupied territories, including Jerusalem.

In a letter to the Secretary-General, Mr. Al-Kidwa said the repressive policies and practices of Israel against the Palestinian people were escalating. On 30 March, the Israeli Government had sealed off the occupied territory of the West Bank, except Arab Jerusalem, had increased the activities of the armed forces there, and had changed the open-fire regulations for Israeli soldiers against Palestinian civilians. In March alone, 28 Palestinian civilians had been killed and more than 800 injured, he noted.

Mr. Al-Kidwa referred to a letter from the Permanent Mission of Israel to the United Nations, dated 29 March, which, he said, reflected official Israeli policy not to recognize that the occupation itself was the cause of the prevailing situation in the Palestinian territory. Israelis in the territory were "colonial settlers brought there by the Israeli authorities in flagrant

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violation of the Fourth Geneva Convention and against numerous Security Council resolutions," he asserts.

Official Palestinian policy remained unchanged with regard to the intifadah and the current peace process, he went on to say. However, Israeli policies and practices, including the deportation of more than 400 Palestinian civilians in December 1992 and Israeli non-compliance with Security Council resolution 799 (1992), seriously undermined the prospects for the peace process.
S/25511

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Barbados has asked for the inclusion of an additional item in the General Assembly agenda for its forty-seventh session entitled "Emergency assistance to Cuba". The request was forwarded to the Assembly by the Permanent Representative of Barbados, Besley Maycock, in his capacity as Chairman of the Latin American and Caribbean Group.

In a letter to the Secretary-General, dated 31 March, Mr. Maycock pointed out that eight of the 14 provinces of Cuba had been seriously affected by unusually strong winds, which had destroyed thousands of homes, production and service installations, such as hospitals, schools and food storages, and inflicted heavy losses on staple crops, such as banana, and the sugar harvest. Intense sea-water flooding also caused the loss of full stocks of antibiotics, he said.

Although national efforts have been fully deployed to counter the effects of the storm, the Group of Latin American and Caribbean States considered it necessary that the United Nations encourage the provision of massive international assistance to Cuba.

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The Commission on Transnational Corporations began its annual 10-day meeting at Headquarters today, aiming to promote the contribution of foreign direct investment to international growth and development.

Work is expected to focus on the role that foreign investors can play in privatization and in aiding structural reform in developing countries and economies in transition. Transnational corporation executives will air their views on key trade and investment issues facing policy-makers. The Commission will review trends in foreign direct investment, including the emergence of global production systems and the growth in investment flows to developing countries. It will also consider the corporate response to the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED).

Meanwhile, the United Nations has established a list of the world's 100 largest transnational corporations in an effort to shed some light on who are the world's most significant foreign investors.

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According to the listing, issued by the United Nations Transnational Corporations and Management Division in the Department of Economic and Social Development, Royal Dutch Shell -- a British-Dutch combine with $106 billion in total assets -- is the largest transnational. It is followed by Ford with $55 billion and General Motors, $52 billion, in foreign assets.

There are currently over 36,000 parent transnational corporations, of which 3,000 are from developing countries, according to the listing. These parents give rise to over 170,000 affiliates, over half of which are located in developing countries.

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CORRECTION:

In Friday Highlights, 2 April, third sentence of the second paragraph of the story on the Secretary-General's trip to Asia and Europe should have read:

The Secretary-General is scheduled to visit San Marino on 16 April. While in Rome, he will meet with representatives of Portugal and Indonesia on the situation in East Timor.

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